

# NGED CUSTOMER PANEL - Minutes

15 December 2022

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## **Attending (Customer Panel):**

GM - Gabby Mallett (Chair)

KR - Kate Robbins, Wessex Water

BR – Bob Radford, Kirklington Parish Council

## **Attending (NGED):**

RA - Richard Allcock

NJ - Nicki Johnson

CH – Chris Hayton

AS – Alison Sleightholm

GM welcomed the group and NJ detailed some last-minute apologies due to illness.

### **Questions following the panel pre-meet**

**Q: Answering a call in 3.59 seconds is fast - have we got lots of people waiting for the phone to ring**

A: We run a 24/7 rota for first line of cover – but then we resource for volumes and ramp up when needed e.g. severe weather events. Contact Centre also proactively contact customers making outbound calls, so we utilise both people and technology so we can answer quickly. We also have various channels so customers can contact us in their preferred method.

**Q: Non lost-time accidents have gone up from 30 to 40? Why?**

AS explained the trajectory has come down and it is so low so a small variations are visible. It is not an indication of a trend – but we are working hard to get messages out to teams that we have a fair safety culture and all reports and near misses should be reported.

**Q: Can you improve on the 18% success rate on data cleanse and why is it low?**

A: RA relayed discussions with our Contact Centre team where they explained a key reason calls are less successful at the moment is as a result of people getting lots of junk calls and having a distrust of calls from companies and businesses. The group talked about changing calls to a recognised number - 'NGED' for example. CH confirmed we are looking at text visibility so we can dynamically target messages. [A post meeting check confirmed the NGED number is displayed so customers don't see 'no caller ID'.]

**Q: The connections broad measure score for west midlands is low?**

A: The group discussed the reporting pack and it was agreed the pack would be changed for the next meeting to bring it more in line with internal Board reporting. The Network Services Manager, West Midlands has since confirmed his team is currently working to understand the reasons for any regional variation and of course to improve our scores.

### **Actions:**

- 1. NJ to amend the reporting to bring it in line with board reporting next time**
- 2. NJ to invite panel members to a social obligations surgery on 19 Jan (rescheduled from today)**

### **Chris Hayton talked to the group about winter preparedness**

#### **Discussion:**

BR noted accurate weather reporting is four days in advance so asked why NG doesn't publicise power cuts. CH explained that when NGED has high confidence that the weather will affect our network we place a storm banner on the website updating customers about the potential disruption and informing them of

preparation we are undertaking. We then ramp this up when required, i.e. if the weather worsens our website homepage launches into 'storm mode' and is a dedicated power outage resource. We also email registered customers and stakeholders before, during and after severe weather events. This allows us to inform recipients of our preparation, how customers are being affected and then performance in response to any network outages. Depending upon the severity of the storm we have scalability within our social media response, i.e. within a severe weather incident we only post about power cut preparation and storm messaging. GM suggested NGED send winter preparedness advice to allow people to be forewarned. CH explained we would be doing this and do target winter preparedness on social media for certain audiences.

CH talked about proactive contact for PSR customers and BR confirmed he had had such contact and it was very good and allowed him to cleanse his PSR record at the same time. BR noted that reminders to boost freezers and charge phones/batteries were helpful messages for rural customers.

The group discussed Rota Load Disconnections (RLD) and GM asked whether people need to know what letter they are in advance. CH explained there would be Government communication (the Government will work with the ENA to communicate via a national press release and media launch, using the Prime Minister to inform the public), the 48 hour notice would be on the news and we would text customers.

GM was concerned about worrying people by including load blocks but we are clear that RLD interruptions remain unlikely and our message is calming. Our letter campaign to PSR customers includes their rota load block letter for their information. We will have an online tool to inform customers of their block letter if they would like further information – the usage of this tool will be approved by the ENA prior to launch. GM asked if we could review along the way and CH confirmed we are phasing any communications so we can review and ensure the message is well received as we go.

GM felt that as we are National Grid, the comms look 'national' and asked what other DNOs are doing? CH confirmed we have a co-ordinated industry approach and are sharing information on processes and comms with other DNOs. There will also be a government-led national approach as detailed above in the event of RLD.

KR asked if contacting all PSR customers is part of the usual data cleanse and RA explained it is over and above – data cleanse is usually every customer once every two years. We are hoping we can cover some contacts digitally to help the data cleanse.

Richard Hellen noted (in advance of the meeting) it would be useful to have recommended tactics for dealing with Rota Load Disconnections by various sectors (schools, health & social care, etc.) based on input from consultations with representative organisations (FSB for small businesses, NHS England for hospitals, for Care Homes, etc.). He felt there might be some lessons learned from the extreme form of winter preparedness being considered in the Ukraine. For example, calls for expressions of interest have very recently been published for large scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) within the Ukraine's electricity network. CH did note NGED is considering as many avenues as possible for hard-to-reach customers – GP surgeries for example and AS talked about a seminar for healthcare providers which has been provided this morning.

KR talked about warm hubs and wondered if we had considered using them to share the preparedness advice and support. RA explained community matters funded partners receive training and support to allow them to disseminate preparedness advice and facilitate PSR sign-ups. Gabby noted age UK, libraries and local authorities might also be useful ways to share the message. BR suggested we could send emails to parish clerks and NJ confirmed further work is being done in this arena behind the scenes. BR mentioned that cheap generators can cause issues with boilers and laptops and wanted us to share information with contact centre staff on this

GM heard about the recent gas outage on the radio and felt senior people talking positively about the PSR would have been better than a doom and gloom message. CH agreed this is an opportunity for us to share our message nationally in a positive way.

**Actions:**

- 3. NJ to follow up the suggestion of getting more parish councils on board as referral partners**
- 4. CH to report back to the panel with an update in March**
- 5. NJ to add notes to the contact centre pages and staff information hub on generator issues and information**
- 6. All panel members to review campaign and comments welcome on both campaign approach and leaflet content**

**Nicki Johnson** noted some information is in the pack about the recent round of local network investment events. The draft report has been reviewed and feedback from stakeholders was used to create some proposed actions for NGED.

BR asked if the public could use NG charging points but AS said not the general public but of course if emergency responders or other utilities were stuck we would consider.

Richard Hellen also sent some suggestions prior to the meeting including setting up a connections user group and social media platform.

**Actions:**

- 7. All panel members to review the proposed actions following the feedback from investment events and send comments or suggested additional actions to NJ.**
- 8. Mini surgery to be offered to panel members to discuss the proposed actions**

**Alison Sleightholm** updated the Panel on Ofgem's Final Determinations on DNOs' RIIO-ED2 Business Plans.

**Q (from the pre-meet): Following the NG takeover have there been any Job losses and is the senior team the same?**

AS updated the group on the NG purchase, the best of both approach of the integration, minor structure changes and a rebrand. Our CEO is still in place as the president (to match the NG model) and AS talked about the directors and structure of the teams.

Ofgem initially proposed a £1.3bn reduction in the expenditure requested in our RIIO-ED2 Business Plan in their draft determination. The final determination was published on 30 November and ED2 will go live on 1 April 2023 – Ofgem have now given us £6.0bn. The NGED proportion of the customer bill will remain broadly flat (at around £100 pa) for the five year period.

The group talked about the delivery plan for ED2 and how the plan will be affected by the reduction in NGED's allowed investment.

## **Actions:**

- 9. The panel requested a new organogram showing the NGED structure**

## **Next meetings**

- 19 Jan 2023 – social obligations surgery on zoom
- 15/16 March 2023 – (date/venue tbc asap)
- 15 June 2023 – zoom
- 14 September 2023 – tbc
- 7 December 2023 zoom – (NB note **new** earlier date given low numbers 15/12/22)